

# Animating frames with Corel® Painter™ X

by Gitanjali Rao



Traditional animators, working on paper using a light box, would draw the first and last positions of the character. These two drawings were called “key frames.” By keeping these two key frames on top of each other on the light box, an animator could use both drawings as a reference while creating the third drawing, which would be the “inbetween frame” of the motion.



The 15-minute short animation film *Printed Rainbow* was created by using the frame stacks feature and the wide variety of brushes in Corel® Painter™ X. The film was later composited on other software and digitally transferred to 35mm film. Because of the way Corel Painter imitates the original media such as oil paints, charcoal, and watercolor few people in the audience realized that the film was painted on a computer!

In the film, an old lady, the protagonist of the film, walks down the corridor of an old palace. She stops to look at the women in the harem, who are dancing and singing. She then turns away and walks toward the camera and past it. In this tutorial, I describe the process of showing this character turning her face. In this animation, I used key frames and inbetween frames, as well as the onion skin feature.

In this tutorial, you will learn about

- creating the frame stack file
- creating the background
- painting the first key frame
- painting the second key frame
- painting inbetween frames



*It's easy to add to, or delete frames from, an FRM file. Choose **Movie > Add Frames** or **Movie > Delete Frames** and enter the appropriate frame information in the **Add Frames** or **Delete Frames** dialog boxes.*



*You can use keyboard shortcuts for many tasks. To open a file, choose **Cmd + Shift + O** for Mac OS®, or **Ctrl + Shift + O** for Windows®. To select all, choose **Cmd + A** for Mac OS, or **Ctrl + A** for Windows. To copy, choose **Cmd + C** for Mac OS, or **Ctrl + C** for Windows. To paste, choose **Cmd + V** for Mac OS, or **Ctrl + V** for Windows.*

## Creating the frame stack file

The first thing you need to do is create an animation file, or frame stack (FRM) file.



### To create an FRM file

- 1 Choose **File > New**.
- 2 In the **New** dialog box, enter the following information:
  - Width: 720 pixels
  - Height: 576 pixels
  - Resolution: 300 pixels. This is the appropriate resolution for television.
- 3 For **Picture Type**, choose **Movie With**, and type the number of frames. For this tutorial, start with 15.
- 4 Click **OK**.  
An **Enter Movie Name** dialog box opens.
- 5 Enter the name for your animation file.  
A **New Frame Stack** dialog box opens.
- 6 In the **New Frame Stack** dialog box, select 3 for **Layers of Onion Skin**, and 24-bit color with 8-bit alpha for **Storage Type**.
- 7 Click **OK**.

## Creating the background

I have already used oil on canvas to create the background of the palace that will be the background for the whole animation. I now need to paste the background into all the frames of my FRM file.



### To create a background in multiple frames

- 1 Choose **File > Open**, and select the background file.
- 2 Choose **Select > All** to select the background image, and choose **Edit > Copy** to copy it.
- 3 Click in the first frame, and choose **Edit > Paste**. To paste the background in each subsequent frame, press the **Page Up** key repeat the same action.
- 4 Drop the background layer by choosing **Layers > Drop All**. This merges the background layer into the canvas.



## Painting the first key frame

I now need to paint the close-up of the old lady's face onto the background.



### To paint the first key frame

- 1 Return to the first frame by clicking the Rewind button **R** in the Frame Stacks palette.
- 2 Choose the Tapered Round Oils 15 brush variant from the Oils category. Paint flat colors to define the basic planes of the face.



- 3 On the property bar, reduce the brush size to about 5, and add details to the face.





- 4 To create a true oil-paint look, change the brush to the Oil Palette Knife variant of the Artists Oils category, keeping the size at 5. Blend the various oil paints. Also, slightly blend the edges of the face into the background.



- 5 To work on the lighting, change the brush to the Burn variant of the Photo category, and apply burn patches to the shadow area. Use the Dodge variant of the Photo category to apply highlights.



Corel Painter X now also has easy access to dodge and burn tools from the toolbox. To highlight an image, choose the Dodge tool . To darken an image, choose the Burn tool .



- 6 To make it mimic the look of oil paints, carefully blend the areas of shadow and highlight into the face. Add a few more detailed strokes using the Tapered Round Oils variant of the Oils category and blending using the Oil Palette Knife variant of the Artists Oils category. The first key frame is ready.



## Painting the second key frame

Now, to prepare the next key frame of the face turned toward the camera, I need a reference to the previous image. To accomplish this, I can use the onion skin feature (Tracing Paper).



### To paint the second key frame

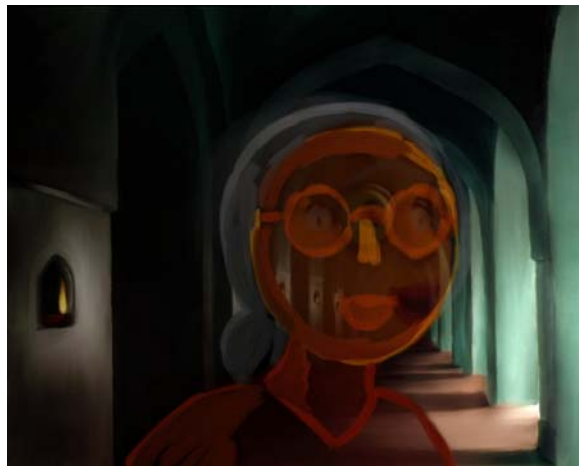
- 1 Navigate to frame 2 in the Frame Stacks palette.

**i** The number of frames displayed on the Frame Stacks palette is determined by the number of onion skin layers. A red triangle appears above the current layer.

- 2 Choose Canvas > Tracing Paper. This command lets you see the first key frame and use it as a reference while you paint the second key frame.



- 3 Paint the image of the old lady, using the same methods as you used for the first key frame.



## Creating inbetween frames

To create smooth movement between frames 1 and 2, you need to add inbetween frames. After you paint an inbetween frame, you need to place it correctly in the frame sequence.

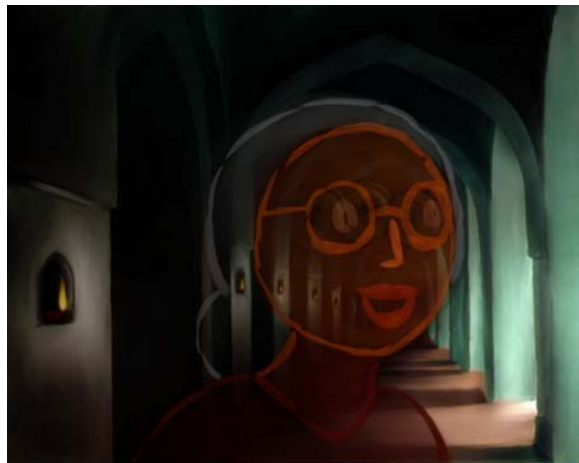


### To paint an inbetween frame

- 1 Navigate to frame 3 in the Frame Stacks palette.
- 2 Choose Canvas > Tracing Paper to turn on the tracing paper.  
Since we set the layers of onion skin to 3, the tracing paper shows three frames at a time. This setting lets you use the key frames (frames 1 and 2) to use as references for your painting.



- 3 Paint the image of the old lady, using the same methods as you used for the key frames.





I decided to make the old lady blink her eyes, to add realism to the movement.



- 4 Turn the Tracing Paper off and on to check whether the inbetween frame looks okay. Paint and blend more, if necessary, to complete the frame.

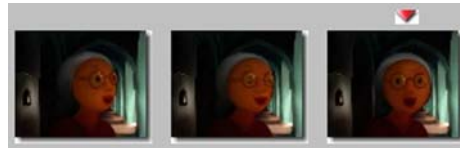






## To place an inbetween frame

- 1 Choose Movie > Add Frames.
- 2 In the Add Frames dialog box, enter 1 in the Add box, select After, and enter 1 in the frame box. Click OK.  
One frame is added after frame 1, so the inbetween frame you just painted becomes frame 4.
- 3 Go to frame 4, and choose Select > All.
- 4 Copy the frame by choosing Edit > Copy.
- 5 Return to frame 2, and paste the layer by choosing Edit > Paste.
- 6 Choose Layers > Drop to drop the layer into the canvas.  
Now, frame 1 is key frame 1, frame 2 is an inbetween, and frame 3 is key frame 2.



If you want the animation to be smoother and more detailed, use the same techniques to add more frames.

## Conclusion

Using Corel Painter X, I created 15 frames to show the old lady turning her head, blinking, and walking past the camera.





## About the author

Gitanjali Rao's two independently produced, directed, and animated short films, *Orange* and *Printed Rainbow*, have won her 11 international awards. She has attended more than 40 festivals all over the world, and has the distinction of being the first Indian animator to win three awards at the Cannes Film Festival. She also has a string of popular and award-winning animated commercials to her credit.

A self-taught animator, Gitanjali learned on the job during her association with many studios and film projects early in her career. Her keen interest in narrative techniques led her into acting and stage crafts for a while. Painting, theater, and folk arts of a culturally rich land finally synthesized into the art of making animated films. Gitanjali Rao currently works as an independent animator and illustrator working on her own films as well as other projects.

For more information about Gitanjali, visit her website at [www.printedrainbow.com](http://www.printedrainbow.com).

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